

*Pawn* *Prisoner of War*

# A PIONEER PREACHER AND MARTYR



CHEN TA YUNG

The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal  
Church, Rindge Literature Department  
150 Fifth Ave., New York City

# A PIONEER PREACHER AND MARTYR

By

Mrs. F. D. GAMEWELL

ALL that was mortal of North China's first Methodist preacher now lies in a martyr's grave. Up through the North Pass, beyond the great wall, where once he preached, Chen Ta Yung, in the summer of 1900, died for the faith,—gave his life for the Master whom he loved.

But Chen Ta Yung has left a record which is an inspiration to the Church in China, and a group of children worthy of such a father, some of whom are already enlisted in the cause for which the father gave his life.

Chen Ta Yung said of himself that he was a castaway until he heard of Jesus, and through him entered upon a new life. But from the time he came into the Methodist Mission in Peking, through all the years of his service, first as gate-keeper, then as

preacher, and finally as ordained minister of the Gospel, he was steadfast, true as steel and reliable under all circumstances.

The beginning of his career as a Christian was full of inequalities. It is always so with those who develop into adult years under the pressure of heathen environment and without a knowledge of God.

Mr. Chen gloried in the power of God which was able to save himself, but at times seemed unconscious of the existence of any power that could save certain mean elements of which he knew in others.

One Sabbath morning in general class he testified to the effect that certain people, living at a distance, had urged him to visit them. He had thought of doing so for the sake of telling them of Jesus, but he added, "I know that they think I am getting rich living among the foreigners, and they will be so intent all the time I am there on trying to get a part of what they think are my gains, that they will have no ear for the Gospel," and then he startled the meeting with this dreary conclusion of the matter, "No, I shall not go. Since they are bound to go to hell I can only let them go to hell."

There were other times when Mr. Chen abounded in a faith which made him free indeed. As soon as he became a Christian he demanded and obtained the unbinding of his wife's feet, in spite of violent protests backed by long established custom, and that

was long before such a reform movement was inaugurated by the Girls' School.

Later on Mr. Chen insisted that his wife should learn the catechism. She was not so inclined, so Mr. Chen, uninformed by any Christian instinct, reverted to heathenism and whipped his wife to improve her interest in the catechism.

At another time with remarkable clearness of vision he stood against an ancient and therefore honorable custom. The missionaries endeavored to put up their buildings free from the exactions of the "squeeze" system, and, at the same time, to train the young Church away from a pernicious custom, by which every man employed in the mission could secretly obtain, on demand, from all who had dealings with the mission, a percentage upon all money paid out. Then Mr. Chen gave invaluable aid, such as no other man would give, and in placid unconsciousness of a heroism that endeared him to the missionaries' hearts, he accepted the misunderstanding and unpopularity among his own people which his course brought upon him.

In nothing did Mr. Chen manifest so much freedom from Chinese prejudices and teachings as in his attitude towards his first-born. His first child was a daughter, but his father's heart—glad and free—bounding into normal action, rejoiced in his little girl and lavished upon her the regard

which, theoretically, belongs only to a man-child.

Through life his Mollie, bright, beautiful Mollie, was his chief joy. With fond pride he beamed upon her in her course through the Peking Girls' School, and with content saw her happily married to a Chinese gentleman who is a Christian physician, and later on visited her in Shanghai, where surrounded by a beautiful family, she reigns in a home of culture and ease, and trains her children in the way into which her father—himself a convert from heathenism—first directed her own footsteps.

He was largely a self-taught man. He pored over the Bible, and plodded patiently through many other books, and so fitted himself for the discussions in which he was often engaged. Some one, knowing that he had not been regularly educated, asked him how it was that he could venture, as he often did, to let himself be drawn into discussions with men of scholarship. "Oh," he replied, "*I keep to the Bible* and I know more about that than they do."

Mr. Chen attended the North China Annual Conference of 1900, which broke up only a few days before the grand climax of those troubled times was reached and the beginning of the siege of Peking.

The way home was already closed to some of the preachers and they remained in Peking and shared the labors and priva-

tions, the hopes and the fears of the siege. Mr. Chen returned to his appointment beyond the great wall, two days' journey from Peking.

When the allies had come and the siege was raised, two of Mr. Chen's sons went up through the Pass to gather tidings of father and mother. They found their bodies only, and those also of a brother and sister who had perished with their parents. And they heard the heart-breaking story of flight and pursuit and final slaughter at the hands of the persecutors.

They buried what remained of the bodies of father and mother and brother and sister. Then, bereft but undaunted, they returned to Peking and the life of their choice—a life of service under the standard which the father had followed to death.

The father's character has left its impression upon the lives of the children. Already two of his sons are among the foremost of those who are pressing where the fight is thickest. These sons, born in a Christian home, consecrated to God in baptism, nurtured in a Christian atmosphere, then graduated from the Peking University, an institution that has developed in the years since Mr. Chen begun his Christian course, have a preparation and fitness that was impossible for the father, and they made glad their father's heart by giving themselves entirely to the cause he loved.

One teaches in the Peking University. He was offered large pay elsewhere and refused to leave the school. Then when he was employed to teach English to Li Hung Chang's nephews out of school hours, he turned into the University's needy treasury all that he received thereby.

In the summer of 1902 he was sent as China's representative to the World's Student Christian Federation at Sorö, Denmark, and to the World's Conference of Young Men's Christian Associations at Christiania. He returned to China by way of the United States. He visited Harvard and Princeton and addressed the students there. The "Intercollegian" says of him: "At both places the men were deeply impressed by his earnestness and personal attractiveness." He also was present at the Cleveland Convention, where again his earnestness impressed all who heard him.

Another son is an ordained minister, deeply consecrated and full of the power of the Spirit. He also turns away from offers of money-making positions, and chooses a life of poverty that he may serve God and his own people who know not God or know him very imperfectly.

Staunch, true-hearted Chen Ta Yung! So faithful with his one talent! How, in the kingdom into which he passed through so tragic an entrance, he must rejoice over these sons of many talents who also in

faithfulness give their all for the Master's using!

In the land where Chen Ta Yung died for the faith, and where his sons live for service, the work of character building goes on; and from year to year the schools are sending forth their brightest and best into the great harvest field.

The schools need money. The schools need men. Now is the day of opportunity in China.